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## Controlling Skunks

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## controlling **Skunks**

Prepared by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Agriculture Administration Building, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, in cooperation with State agricultural, conservation and health agencies.

The striped skunk is the most common species in the North Central States, though the little spotted skunk or "civet cat" is abundant in Minnesota, Iowa, and westward.

**ECONOMIC ASPECTS** - Skunks are a reservoir in the transmission of rabies. In many states they have replaced foxes as the most important wildlife species spreading this dread disease.



**STRIPED SKUNK**



**SPOTTED SKUNK**

Skunks are poor climbers and find most of their food on or near the ground. Their diet includes grubs, insects, small rodents, snakes, frogs, carrion, fruits, berries, mushrooms, bird eggs, etc.

They make their homes by enlarging existing holes, or by using the dens of other animals. Several families sometimes occupy the same den. Inhabited dens may be recognized by fresh droppings containing undigested insect parts near the mound or hole. Hair and rub marks may also be present.

A less serious, but common, complaint occurs when one or more skunks take up residence under buildings used by humans. While searching for grubs, skunks frequently uproot turf in lawns and golf courses. This damage consists of small pits 3 or 4 inches across, or sometimes large sections of the turf are rolled back. Other economic losses result from damage to eggs, poultry, ground-nesting birds, beehives, and corn. On the credit side of the ledger, skunks eat insects and small rodents, and are considered an important furbearer.

**CONSULT STATE AND LOCAL LAWS BEFORE APPLYING CONTROLS**

### CONTROL AROUND BUILDINGS

Rather than destroy skunks needlessly, it is better to exclude them from places where they may become a nuisance. If they are under a building, close all but one opening and sprinkle a little patch of flour in front of it. Examine this patch of flour after dark. If tracks show that the animals have departed, close the opening and seal it with cement, sheet metal or wire netting. Illuminating an area frequented by skunks often has a good repellent effect, causing them to seek harborage elsewhere.

Where skunks have gotten into basement window wells or similar pits, from which they cannot escape, a board with cleats nailed at six-inch intervals can be cautiously lowered into the well. The skunk will then be able to climb out.

Skunks can be excluded from poultry houses by closing all doors and other openings every night. To keep them from open poultry ranges, surround the range with a three-foot wire-netting fence, set two feet above the ground and one foot below the surface.

### CONTROL ON LAWNS

Skunks damage lawns by digging in them for insect grubs. This damage can be greatly reduced or prevented by using soil insecticides to destroy the insect grubs. Contact your County Agricultural Agent or Extension Entomologist for materials and amounts.

### CONTROL BY TRAPPING

Skunks can be caught with No. 1 or 1-1/2 steel traps set at the entrance to their den. When a den is used by more than one animal, time can be saved by setting several traps. The trap stake should be located far enough from the hole to keep the trapped animal in the open. Skunks are frequently taken in unbaited traps, but it is better to use the head of a fowl or a dead mouse as bait, or a fetid scent to attract them.

In places where their scent would be objectionable, use baited boxtraps or wire-cage traps covered with burlap. Transfer the trap and animal to a suitable place where it can be released or drowned without removing it from the trap.

### CONTROL OF ODORS

Skunk odors on pets, clothing, under buildings, etc. may be neutralized by liberal use of a deodorant such as neutroleum alpha. The use of vinegar or household chlorine bleach in weak solution is also suggested for removing the odor from clothing or pets.

